

Test the Waters (Step 4)

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Step 4 Summary Worksheet

Non-traditional Work

Approximately 33% of the American workforce is “non-traditional,” meaning they work part-time, have temporary jobs are self-employed, or work in a field that historically has not employed their gender and/or ethnic group. Volunteering is also non-traditional work. You

don’t get paid but you gain other benefits, such as experience and contacts. While non-traditional work is a way of life for some, for others it’s a temporary measure and a great job-hunting tool.

“Besides everything else, temping is also the most lucrative job search program in the world.”
— Brian Hassett
The Temp Survival Guide



Temp Work

“Temping” means that you work in a position temporarily—from one day to one year. You actually are employed by an agency that sends you to other companies to work. These days, some companies only hire employees who begin as temp workers.

Benefits — Temping offers many benefits:

- Variety of job types and activities.
- Opportunity and challenge of learning in new settings.
- Flexible schedule/choice about whether to work.
- Wages while job hunting.
- Opportunities to make more connections.
- The “inside line” on obtaining a full-time job.

Downside — For many people, temp work has several disadvantages:

- Inadequate, if any, benefits (such as health insurance).
- No security—temps are the first to be let go, often with little warning.
- Little real flexibility since turning down assignments may limit the work you’re offered.
- Potentially boring assignments.

Non-traditional Work (continued)

Volunteering

Like temping, volunteering is a way to try out a job or type of work before you commit yourself to it “permanently.” It also provides a way to make connections outside the employment arena.

To maximize the benefits, devote at least 100 hours to each volunteer position to show that you are committed.

Free Agency/Self-Employment

Free agents are temp workers who skip the “middle man.” Instead of going through a temp agency, you approach a company directly and offer to work on a temporary basis.



Benefits — As a free agent, you are self-employed, which means you:

- Get to be in control
- May earn more than you would with a temp agency

Downside — Free agency does create some disadvantages. You have to:

- File as self-employed, withholding your own taxes
- Be very motivated: if you don’t make yourself work, you won’t get paid

Résumé Considerations

Describing your temping, volunteering and free agency work on your résumé when you try to find full-time “permanent” employment can present some challenges.

- If you are a temp worker, you can present yourself as employed by one company: the temp agency. Or you can group similar jobs together. Or, if you worked at one assignment a long time, list that as the employer but do indicate that you worked there through a temp agency.
- If you are a free agent, you can simply write “self-employed” and treat it as you would any other job.
- If you did volunteer work, list the skills and accomplishments you gained in the EXPERIENCE section of résumé rather than the VOLUNTEER WORK section. The latter is really optional and designed to show that you are well-rounded.

Entrepreneurial Work*

Having the responsibility of designing, developing, and overseeing the daily activities of your own business can be exciting, challenging, and a completely satisfying work environment for many people. If you are thinking of starting your own business, you may want to review the following statements.

Do These Statements Apply to You?

- * I want my work to be more meaningful.
- * I want work that is new, exciting, and challenging.
- * I need a change. I want a new start.
- * I am not interested in my career the way I used to be.
- * I am out of work and I want something more than just another job.
- * I often think about starting my own business.

If these statements describe you, you may be changing — inside. Perhaps the things that used to be important to you don't matter as much. Maybe you are beginning to define success differently than you once did. You may have taken on new priorities, values and interests. Or perhaps you need to change because of other circumstances. Your career may have been going smoothly when you were suddenly laid off. Your job loss may have been because of company downsizing, corporate restructuring, plant closure, or the introduction of new technology. Or maybe you have just graduated and have been unsuccessful in finding a good job.

Whatever changes are occurring in your life, you feel it's time to make a career change, and you are wondering about starting your own business.



* This section is adapted from "Minding Your Own Business" (pp 1-2 of "Thinking of starting your own business"; and pp 1-5 "Could you succeed in small business"), http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/redirect_hr.html. Source of the information is the Human Resources Development Canada. Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Public Works and the Government Services, Canada, 2003.

Entrepreneurial Work (continued)

Could You Succeed In Small Business?

You may have many reasons for wanting to start a business. They might include wanting to make money, having personal independence and self-fulfilment, or escaping the frustrations of employment — and unemployment. Your reasons may be good ones, but your decision must be based on more than simply a desire to change your situation. A new venture is risky. It may make heavy demands, financially and time-wise, on you and on those close to you. It might not provide you with security such as a regular pay check, medical and dental benefits, and a pension plan.

One of the first steps you should take in making the decision to start a small business is to determine if you have the right skills and temperament. You have to be as honest with yourself as possible.

A Reality Check for Small Business Owners

The following checklist will suggest what to look for in yourself to improve your chances for success. The more “yes” answers, the better suited you may be to being an entrepreneur.

1. Do I have a burning desire to be “on my own?” Yes ___ No ___

Most entrepreneurs have a strong inner drive to strike out on their own. They like the idea of being their own boss and not having to report to anyone.

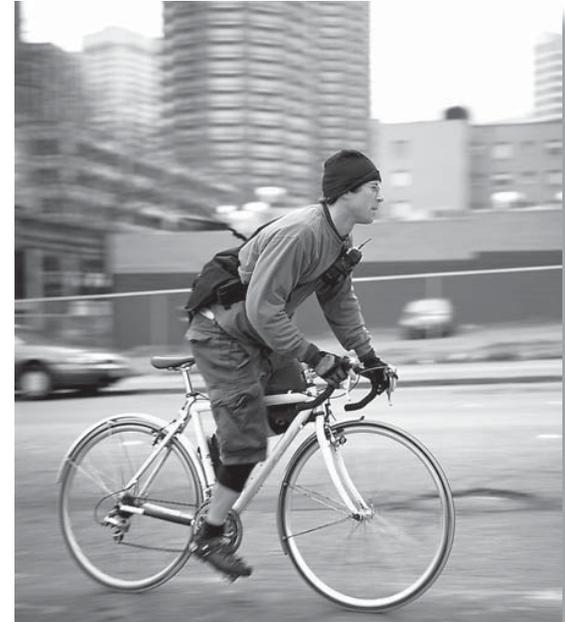
2. Am I confident that I can succeed? Yes ___ No ___

Successful entrepreneurs believe in themselves. They are optimistic about projects they undertake, and are good at motivating others and sharing their enthusiasm when pursuing goals. They are likely to say, “When I set my mind to it, I usually do well” or “I won’t let a setback stop me.”

3. Am I willing to take calculated and moderate risks? Yes ___ No ___

Going into business involves taking a chance. You may have to push yourself beyond what is comfortable for you and try new things. Successful business people are willing to take risks, but they are also realistic. They gather as much information and support as possible before making a move. In this way, they build a safety net for themselves and decrease the amount of risk involved.

(more)



Entrepreneurial Work (continued)

4. Am I a self-starter? Yes ___ No ___

Successful entrepreneurs believe what happens in life usually depends on themselves. They are often described as “internal” — people who choose to do something based on their own interests and views. Because they believe that they control their own destiny, they refuse to be at the mercy of others or of events. As a result, they take the initiative in starting projects and getting ideas off the ground.

5. Am I able to set long-term goals? Can I stick with them? Even if I’m faced with a difficult problem or situation? Yes ___ No ___

Successful business people are patient and determined. They have the ability to work toward a goal, delaying rewards until a future time, and persist even in difficult times. They understand that it takes time to build success — sometimes years.

6. Do I believe that money is the best measure of success? Yes ___ No ___

If your only reason for going into business is to make money, it may not be enough to make you a success. The desire for money is not a prime motivation for most successful business people. Rather, they want personal fulfillment and enjoy doing their best. While money is important to them, it is a means to do more and not simply a way to gain wealth and prestige.

7. Am I creative? Am I always looking for new approaches and ideas? Am I innovative? Yes ___ No ___

Entrepreneurs often have many ideas and a great capacity to dream up and carry out projects. They are highly motivated by their desire to innovate or to bring their own approach to doing things. Never satisfied or content, they believe there is always a better way to get a job done.

8. Am I good at making decisions? Are my decisions generally sound? Yes ___ No ___

Successful business people tend to be comfortable making their own decisions. They say, “When I decide to do something, I carry it through to the end, overcome any obstacles and face all the issues.”

9. Am I willing to market my product or service? Yes ___ No ___

Successful business people do not believe the old saying: “Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door.” They know that proper marketing is critical to business performance. They advise: “You must sell, sell, sell.”

10. Am I a good organizer? Do I pay attention to details? Yes ___ No ___

Conducting a successful business requires organizational skills and competence. As a small business owner, you are your own boss. Since there is no one looking over your shoulder to make sure you are doing your job well, you will need self-discipline. Your ability to pay attention to details can make the difference between success or failure.

11. Am I flexible? Do I adapt to change? Can I handle surprises? Yes ___ No ___

Change is a fact of life. To succeed in business, you must accept this fact and use it to your advantage. Successful business people monitor social trends, adopt new technologies, compare themselves to the competition, and listen and watch with an open mind.

Entrepreneurial Work (continued)

Do You Have What It Takes?

By now, you will be able to put together a good picture of the qualities and skills required to succeed in your own business. You are likely to be happy and successful in your own business if you:

- * Possess an inner drive to be independent
- * Are able to set and achieve goals
- * Are flexible and adaptable
- * Are willing to work hard
- * Have confidence in your ability to succeed
- * Possess self-discipline, leadership abilities and organizational skills
- * Have the confidence to make decisions and take calculated risks

If you don't have all these qualities, you might need to develop some additional skills, or perhaps you might require an associate, partner, or employee whose strong qualities can counterbalance your weaknesses.

If you don't have at least some of these qualities, you will have to decide if a small business is the right career option for you. If it isn't, and you are already employed, you might be better off staying in your current job and creating new possibilities there. If that doesn't work, you might consider other jobs that could interest you either with your current employer or with a new one. If you do not have a job, perhaps you should look for new employment in your area of expertise.

If you are still having difficulty deciding if starting a business is the best career option for you, go through the reality check again with a friend or someone you trust to be honest with you. Ask them for their opinion. Compare notes. The exercise can be very revealing — and worthwhile.



Green Careers

Events in the past decade, both socially and politically, have reinvigorated a movement that first came into the public eye in the early 1960's. The Green Movement has brought attention to the need to implement and incorporate values into the workplace that aim to reduce the impact our lifestyles have on the environment. At the same time, this movement has brought about an increase in the creation and availability of Green Careers, or jobs that focus on reducing the cumulative and harmful effects on the environment through various actions including: conservation, invention, public awareness, and research.

As a career self-manager, incorporating green values into your job search can range from finding traditional and new environmental jobs, to using one's green knowledge and passion in a non-environmental job. A job seeker whose work values include incorporating green values may be surprised to find that traditional occupations already include green aspects or are very open to incorporating them into the job description. What is important is the job seeker's ability to be creative, open, and persuasive without being pushy.

Jan's story is an example of how to incorporate green values at work:

Jan started a new job with a warehouse in an industrial area. After getting to know her new co-workers she realized that many of them live within five miles of the warehouse and they all drive in separate cars to work. After talking to the manager at the warehouse, Jan was able to start a program that rewards employees for carpooling, taking public transit, or riding their bikes to work. Not only did this substantially relieve the parking issue in the industrial area, Jan and her co-workers were saving lots of money on transportation and feeling healthier.

What changes can you identify in your current or future career field that can be addressed using your green values?

Issue

Change

If this field appeals to you, review your Holland Codes from Exercise 5. Using the list below, you may be able to find ideas for green careers that are related to your basic interest areas.

Holland Codes and Green Occupations

Realistic

Soil and Plant Scientist
Chemist
Organic Farmer
Tree Trimmer and Pruner
Forest and Conservation Worker

Investigative

Forester
Geographer
Zoologist and Wildlife Biologist
Environmental Scientist
Range Manager

Artistic

Editor for a Green publication
Eco-Interior Designer
Eco-Fashion Designer
Film and Video Editor for Green Documentaries

Social

Science Teacher
Health Educator
Training and Development Manager
Park Naturalist
Financial Advisor for Green Funds

Enterprising

Environmental Lawyer
Green Construction Manager
Nursery and Greenhouse Manager
Wholesale/Retail Buyer for Green Products
Organic Chef

Conventional

Environmental Compliance Inspector
Fire Inspector
Aquacultural Manager
Real Estate Agent for Green Properties
Environmental Law Paralegal

Internet Resources:

<http://www.greenbiz.com>

This website offers updated information and resources on sustainable business practices and events.

<http://solarliving.org/default.asp>

The Solar Living Institute provides a wealth of information and workshops on sustainability and green careers.

<http://www.cassio.com/FreeResourceGuides.htm>

Jim Cassio has created a resource that compiles up to 80 occupations within the Green Career Movement. His free publication, [Green Careers Resource Guide](#), can be downloaded from this website.

The U.S. Military

How about getting an education from Uncle Sam? Did you know that the US military offers job training, continuing education, financial aid, and a host of other benefits to qualifying candidates? No? Better take another look at what the various branches offer.

Air Force

Take advantage of over 150 different jobs. The job fields include technical, managerial, and in-flight. Once you identify your first job choice, the Air Force tries hard to put you there. The Air Force website (<http://www.airforce.com>) tells how you can gain work experience and advance your education. The Air Force will work to help you discover where you fit in and how you'll leave your mark. Whether you're in high school ready to join the enlisted ranks and continue your education, or in college looking for a career as an officer, they have a variety of career paths. Interest peaked? Log on and learn more.

Army

From high technology to satellites, digital communication to construction equipment repair, health and medical services to food services, the US Army can provide you with the job skills you need for your future. Check out <http://www.goarmy.com>. Chat on line with their cyber recruiters or visit their job bank for answers to questions.

The Army College Fund offers up to \$26,500 towards your college education. They also provide five new cash enlistment bonuses up to \$20,000 that you can apply to college costs, or spend as you choose.

Coast Guard

The US Coast Guard (USCG) is the country's oldest continuous seagoing service. You choose your career path based on aptitude, physical abilities, security clearance, motivation and determination. All specialties are open to both men and women, and include communications, small boat operations, electronics, maintenance, aviation mechanics, and more.

The USCG values continuing education highly and you may be helped to defray the cost of college-accredited courses through the Montgomery GI Bill. Call 1-800-424-8883, or access the USCG website at <http://www.uscg.mil/jobs>.



The U.S. Military (continued)

Marine Corps

The US Marine Corps website is an interactive tool which challenges you to plan your military career while you're still in high school or college. Once you log on to their website (<http://www.marines.com>) you can select your current educational status (high school student, college student, university graduate, etc.) and view the various jobs and benefits available to you at that educational level. If you enlist and learn as you serve, any one of 25 occupational specialties are available, including public affairs, legal services, audio-visual specialties, intelligence, logistics, engineering, operational communications, data and communications maintenance, and more.

After enlisting, you can be eligible for a variety of educational benefits. The Tuition Assistance Program, the Montgomery GI Bill, and several other tuition and financial aid programs allow you to pursue your educational goals while on active duty.

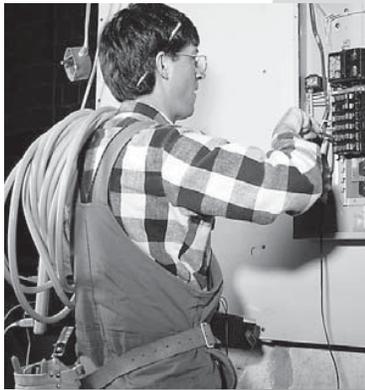
Navy

If you enlist in the US Navy, you can be trained in one of 50,000 jobs in over 60 job fields, including electronics, engineering, computer technology, nuclear propulsion, aviation, health care, and more. Job choices are based on qualifying requirements at the time of selection.

The Navy encourages continuing education, and will pay all or most of the tuition for active duty people stationed ashore who schedule courses during their off-duty time at accredited schools. They also have three financial aid programs offering money to help pay for other college expenses. Learn more by visiting their website at <http://www.navyjobs.com>.



I believe its the best thing I've done in my life.
Going to school while you work is like adding
another tool to your tool belt. The guys respect you
more because you've gone to school for your trade.
Combining the book with field learning turns you
into a professional
— Samuel Apodaca, ironworker apprentice



Apprenticeships

A State of California-approved apprenticeship program is an “earn and learn” work-based education program. They range in length from one to five years depending on the complexity of the knowledge and skills to be learned.

The “State registered apprentice” experience starts with an employer hiring you to be a State registered apprentice. The occupation in which you are an apprentice is one of more than 250 State approved apprenticed occupations in California. Nationally there are more than 800 apprenticed occupational titles approved by the federal government. The occupations include psychiatric technician in a State mental hospital, fire fighter, carpenter, electrician, heavy construction equipment operator/driver, and many more job titles. As a State registered apprentice you:

- 1) Immediately begin working, learning, and earning a paycheck from an employer who has a state approved apprenticeship program.
- 2) Have medical benefits.
- 3) Work under the supervision of male or female “journeymen” who have already completed their apprenticeship program and are experienced in their occupation.
- 4) Tuition is free for those courses that are part of the approved “related and supplemental instruction” (RSI) portion of the State registered apprentice’s educational studies at an adult school, Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROCPs) schools, or community college. Some community college apprenticeship programs offer certificates and/or degrees.
- 5) Take the first steps that can lead to many career options in the future.

Apprenticeships (continued)

More about the “State Approved Apprenticeship Program” and What Being a “State Registered Apprentice” Entails

A “State approved apprenticeship program” is a work-based learning program for which an employer or group of employers have applied for and received approval from the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) which is a division within the California Department of Industrial Relations. An approved apprenticeship meets certain standards that help assure that apprentices will have a thorough and well-organized learning experience with pay increases and other benefits such as medical insurance.

If an employer who has a State approved apprenticeship program hires you, then the employer will have you complete the necessary forms to become a State registered apprentice. You will also be granted free tuition at an Adult School, ROCP or community college to take the apprenticeship “related and supplemental instruction” (RSI). Typically, 144 hours of RSI is required per year. The RSI classes provide you with supplemental knowledge and skills that your employer has specified for you to learn as part of your preparation for the specific occupation.

Many people believe that “apprenticeship” equals “construction trades.” Actually, these trades only represent 50 of the 800 apprenticed occupations. Others include barber, correctional officer, vocational nurse, electrician, firefighter, machinist and automobile technician. Currently, over 60,000 apprentices work in California.

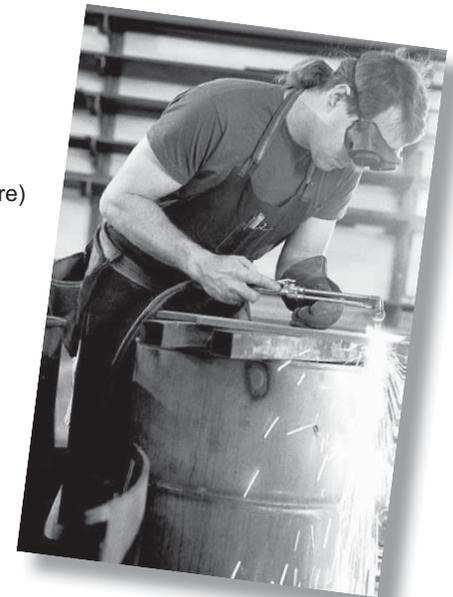
The beginning wage for a new apprentice is about half of the wage paid to a “journeyman.” The apprentice receives a wage increase every six months if the apprentice is

making satisfactory progress on the job and in completing the RSI. Upon completion of the program, the apprentice receives journeyman compensation that in some occupations can range up to \$50 or more per hour plus benefits.

Each program operates under training standards agreed to by the apprenticeship program sponsor in accordance with State and federal laws. The local Apprenticeship Committee (AC) determines the standards of its occupation, including the length of training and compensation.

School-to-Career apprenticeship programs are available for some high school juniors and seniors in California. The students are hired as part-time employees and take the RSI courses. They may work part-time during the school year and then work full-time during the summer. The students are “State registered apprentices” and the employers have “State approved apprenticeship programs.” After completing high school the apprentice goes to work full-time as an apprentice and takes the remaining RSI courses.

(more)



Apprenticeships (continued)

General Qualifications for Apprenticeships

Each apprenticeship has its own criteria. Some general guidelines are:

- Education: High School Diploma, General Education Development (GED) test or High School Proficiency Certificate.
- Age: Minimum age is 16, but usually it is at 18
- Qualifying test for the specific apprenticeship

For some apprenticeships that are of a higher skill and knowledge level there is a need for more than a fundamental knowledge of arithmetic. It is also important to note that the ability to read, write and speak well is more important in some apprenticeships. Some apprenticeships prefer students who have taken shop courses and have some knowledge of mechanical drawing, blueprint reading, drafting, higher mathematics, chemistry, and electrical and/or welding. Physical fitness, a good sense of balance, eye-hand coordination, color sense, strength, agility, ability to work at heights, and mechanical aptitude are desirable qualifications in many occupations. Ability to work with others, good personality, and neat appearance are necessary in all programs.

Steps for Apprenticeship Applicant

- 1) Select an occupation for which you have an aptitude, interest and physical ability.
- 2) Find out about the minimum qualifications and working conditions of the occupation.
- 3) Decide whether you can work under these conditions, some of which may be hazardous or uncomfortable.
- 4) Find out how to apply for the program by contacting:
 - The California Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) via the Internet at <http://www.dir.ca.gov/das/das.html>. Select "Find an Apprenticeship Program" to search by county and occupation.
 - You may also search the Internet for specific crafts or trades. Look for "Apprenticeship" programs.
 - The employer's Apprenticeship Committee (AC)
 - If the AC has a waiting list of applicants, get on the waiting list and seek employment.
 - You may also enter an apprenticeship after experience in the military or industry.
- 5) Complete the required application and take any required aptitude tests.

Regional Apprenticeship Offices

Fresno	(559) 445-5431
Los Angeles	(213) 576-7750
Oakland	(510) 622-3259
Sacramento	(916) 263-2877
San Jose	(408) 277-1273
Santa Ana	(213) 576-7750
San Diego	(619) 767-2045

Websites with Information

California's Union Apprenticeships
<http://www.calapprenticeship.org>

Division of Apprenticeship Standards
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/das.html>

Orientation to Apprenticeship Resource Guide
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/ApprenticeshipResourceGuide.pdf>

Problem Work History

When you communicate with employers, the key words are: honesty, openness and employer-focus (not self-focus). Never put anything negative in your résumé and/or application form but don't lie, either. The application, for example, is a legal contract. However, you can put a positive spin on your past and any problems in your work history.

If you approach your potential problems directly and honestly, taking responsibility where appropriate, you may find that your former challenges become your most valuable assets. They demonstrate how you continue to grow, change, and strive to better yourself as an employee and as a person.

Potential Barriers	Possible Solutions
Poor Grades (for students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on extracurricular activities or how you addressed your academic problem.
Not Enough Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize adaptable skills (for example, being a fast learner) and non-work experience.
Job Hopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group similar jobs on your résumé. Don't include every single job you've ever held. Use your cover letter to stress that you want a long-term position.
Long Time with One Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List promotions as different positions to show forward progression. Have a Professional Development section to highlight your ongoing education.
Recent Employment Gaps (of months or years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show work that you did while unemployed, including volunteer and community work projects, family activities and education.
Been Fired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the interview, take responsibility for your actions and/or put the situation in positive light, depending on the circumstances.
Been Laid Off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the present to show that you're moving on.
Temp, Free Agent, Contract Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See "Non-traditional Work" for ways to describe this type of work on your résumé.
"Overqualified"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't include information on résumé you may think raise red flags. Emphasize your eagerness to work at the job in question; show that you'll stay.
No College Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have some college credits, list the college without a graduation date. Emphasize recent training, including workshops. Skip the Education section entirely (unless you're a young person).
Criminal History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that only convictions matter. Avoid occupations related to any felony you might have (such as, if you stole, don't try to work with money).
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address the issue directly and openly state that you have the ability to overcome any challenges your condition may pose.

Adapted in part from Kim Isaacs and J. Michael Farr (monster.com) and Maureen Crawford Hentz (quintcareers.com)

Problem Work History (Continued)

Ex-Offenders

Approaching a job search or career change can be intimidating under usual circumstances, but attempting to get back into the workforce after serving time in jail or prison can be even more challenging. The obstacles faced may include dealing with the stigma about your past, filling out the 'conviction question' on the job application, and facing the background check that so many employers use today. It would be easy to get discouraged under these circumstances, but there are resources and information centers where job seekers with a criminal background can obtain assistance and become better informed about their rights. The tips and resources list below are designed to help you make a smooth transition back into the workforce.

Be Positive

At all points in the job search there will be times when you may feel attacked or judged because of your recent past. The important thing is to not get defensive or cause your potential employer to feel defensive when asking you about your past or choosing not to hire you. It is essential that you remain future focused. This means making statements about what you can and will offer your new employer should they hire you.

Be Prepared

Employers will ask you about your record, both on the application and in person. Ahead of time, prepare various honest answers to these questions. Acknowledge your past, and emphasize how you have changed your view and approach to difficult situations. On the application, you might consider answering the question by requesting to speak about it in person. If the application or employer insists on having your response in writing, take your time and get assistance in writing a full page about the incident, your experience, and how you have changed. Do not blame someone else in your description, take responsibility for your actions.

Access Resources

There are many organizations and agencies whose specific purpose is to help ex-offenders re-enter the workforce. Many of these resources offer assistance ranging from free legal help to preparing a resume and practicing for an interview. Not tapping into these resources could prevent you from exercising your rights, being a well-informed worker, and landing that much needed job!

Resources:

<http://www.centerforce.org> Center Force is a support link for ex-offenders transitioning back into the community. They provide support, education, and advocacy for people with criminal backgrounds.

<http://www.edd.ca.gov> The California Employment Development Department has a directory of One-Stop Centers throughout the state. The One-Stop Centers offer free career counseling, job search assistance, resume help, and other job related services.

<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp/other/crimlawclean.htm> The California Courts Self Help Center offers information about cleaning up a criminal record. It offers various recommendations based on several situations regarding misdemeanor and felony convictions.

<http://www.norcalerviceleague.org/index.htm> The Northern California Service League provides resources and assistance to ex-offenders. A major event sponsored is the Annual Job Fair and Conference for Ex Offenders.